A MARSHALL CAVENDISH PUBLICATION 29 IN FORTNIGHTLY PARTS

The Ancestral Trail

CYBER CHALLENGE IN THE NEXT DIMENSION

29 Flector,

Hi-Speed Solar Cruiser

Battle of wits with an airborne assassin

Juliet Heller

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In the twenty-ninth sector

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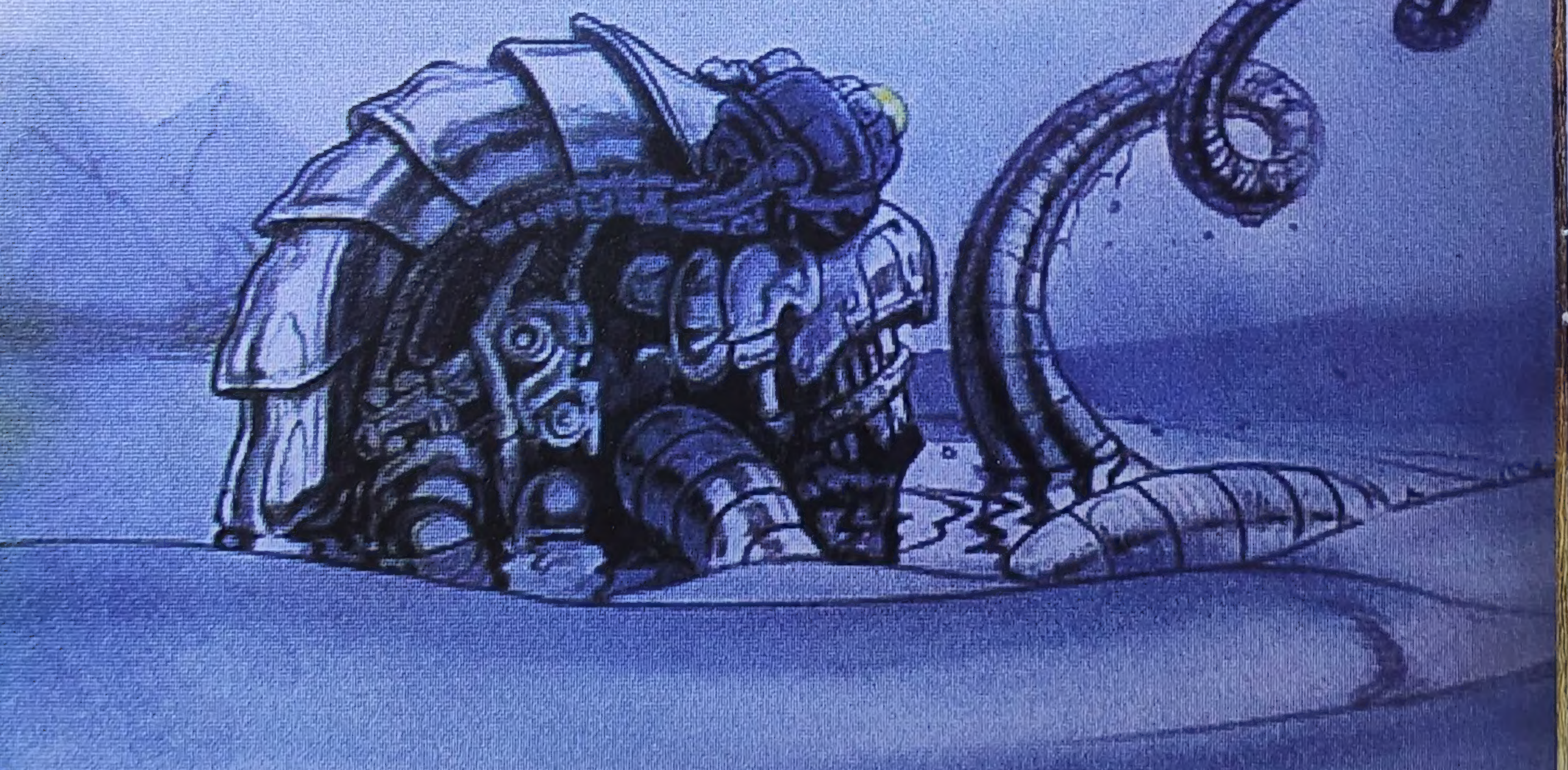
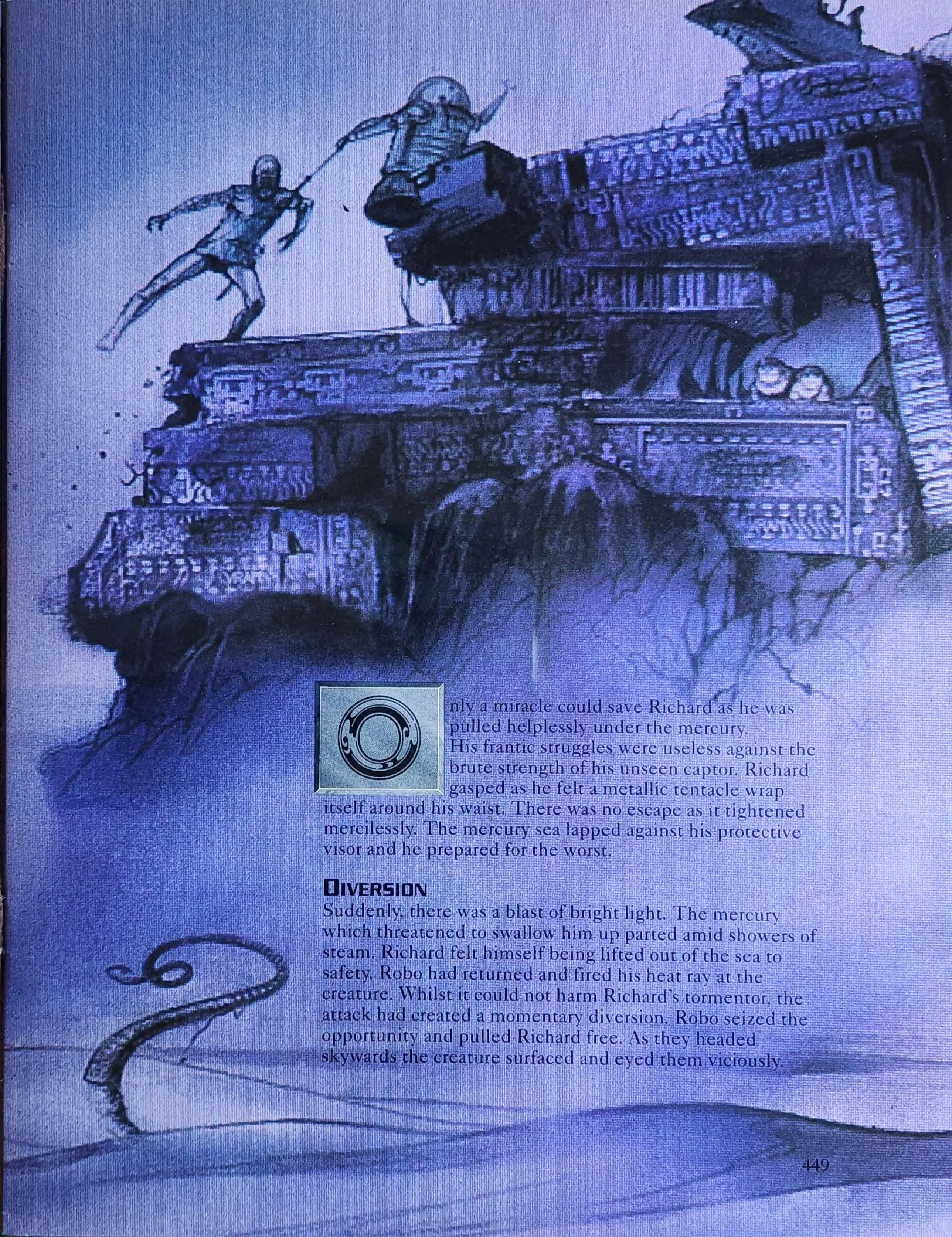




Only a miracle could save Richard as he was pulled helplessly under the mercury. His frantic struggles were useless against the brute strength of his unseen captor. Richard gasped as he felt a metallic tentacle wrap itself around his waist. There was no escape as it tightened mercilessly. The mercury sea lapped against his protective visor and he prepared for the worst.

Diversion

Suddenly, there was a blast of bright light. The mercury which threatened to swallow him up parted amid showers of steam. Richard felt himself being lifted out of the sea to safety. Robo had returned and fired his heat ray at the creature. Whilst it could not harm Richard's tormentor, the attack had created a momentary diversion. Robo seized the opportunity and pulled Richard free. As they headed skywards the creature surfaced and eyed them viciously.

"What was that?" exclaimed Richard as the last few droplets of mercury slipped away from his body armour.

"Hermisite," Robo answered. "Creature exists in mercury sea. Dangerous."

Richard marvelled at Robo's classic piece of understatement as the robot hoisted him away from the mercury sea and set him down on a rocky knoll. There, hovering silently above the ground, the cyber cruiser awaited him.

"I thought the cruiser was lost. How did you retrieve it?" Richard asked.

"Remote control," Robo simply said.

Land of Spikes

Soon the pair were back on the cyber cruiser and hurtling through the air. The mercury sea was long behind them. Once more the terrain had undergone a major change. The dour monotony they had become accustomed to was replaced by a

shimmering blue landscape.

Instead of barren rock they saw a forest of tall, razor-edged metal stalacmites that jutted angrily toward the sky. Bolts of white electricity sparked across them.

"Warning..."

Richard interrupted Robo before he had the chance to finish his sentence.

"...I know!" he said, his face breaking into a smile. "Drive carefully!"

As they travelled, Richard ensured that his attentions were on the cyber cruiser's controls at all times. The spiked landscape seemed to last an eternity.

A QUESTION

The journey allowed Richard to ponder a question that had been troubling him ever since his unexpected arrival in the Cyber Dimension.

"Robo," he said. "Do you think we'll ever find a way out of this place?"

Before Robo could answer, the land of spikes came to an abrupt end. Richard was startled to see what had taken its place. Beneath the cyber cruiser lay an enormous sheet of perfectly flat mirrored glass which stretched on in all directions as far as the eye could see.

"What's happening now, Robo?" Richard asked.

"Mirror membrane," replied the robot. "Separates Cyber Dimension from other worlds and sub-divisions."

"What do you mean?"

"Sensors indicate that Chosen One is approaching Cyber Dimension exit."

Savage newcomer

A huge grin spread over Richard's face as he looked down at the reflection of the cyber cruiser flying over the mirror terrain.

"Do you mean that I'm going home?"

For the second time a question from Richard went unanswered as Robo's attentions were diverted by a new object in the distance. At first Richard thought it was just a trick of the light, but as they drew nearer he could discern a definite shape.

He had no idea what it was

but he was sure that it was hostile.

"Warning! Flector. Mirror creature," Robo said, as if to confirm Richard's fears.

As they approached Flector, Richard began to make out its shape. It appeared to be an enormous spinning disk set on crude metallic frame. It was moving towards them at great speed.

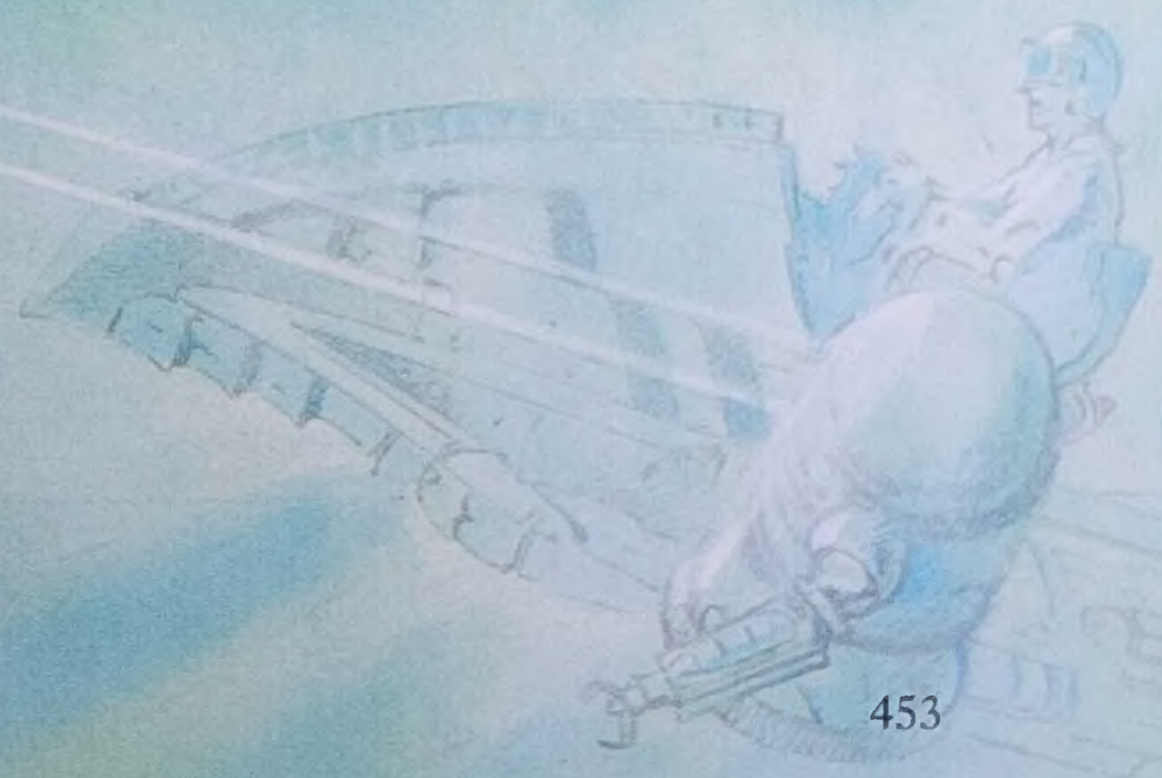
There was a flash of light as Robo fired his heat ray at the newcomer. This was followed by an even stronger flash which almost tipped the cyber cruiser over.

"Flector invincible!" Robo called. "Able to absorb and deflect any power."

The creature had absorbed Robo's ray and fired it back at them.

"How do we fight it, Robo?" Richard cried in desperation.

Then he remembered the binary panel.



Summoning up all his powers of concentration, Richard began decoding the new message on Robo's front panel.

As he did so, Flector powered towards the cruiser and fired a volley of laser beams. Richard steered the craft to the left and narrowly avoided them.

Sound solution

"Got it!" Richard exclaimed in triumph. "Robo – can you make ultrasonic sound?"

"Affirmative," came the answer.

From Robo's internal digital speakers came a deep groan. Within moments this was rising in pitch to a mind-numbing shriek. Richard held his ears in pain as Flector fired more lasers in his direction.

Suddenly, the noise stopped. All Richard could feel was a slight tingling in his ears. Bearing down on him was Flector. It hadn't worked. Flector was still alive!

Once more, Richard looked at the binary message but it was too late. The gigantic mirror creature was upon them.

Richard closed his eyes amid the grim realization that his quest was over. He heard the sound of Flector's lasers and prepared for the worst.

There was the most enormous explosion that Richard had ever heard or imagined. A kaleidoscope of colours and sounds threw Richard and Robo off the cyber cruiser and into the air.

Startled, Richard looked around for Flector and found the giant creature immersed in blazing light. His assailant appeared to breaking up.

"Ultrasonic attack complete." As the booming noise of the explosion intensified, Richard could just about hear Robo's diagnosis .

"Of course!" Richard exclaimed. "The reason I thought that the ultrasonics had failed was because I couldn't hear them."

Another World

Richard may have been unable to hear Robo's ultrasonic blast, but Flector certainly had. Its effects were totally devastating. With an enormous crack, Flector's circular mirror shattered into a million pieces. Its metallic body split and melted into a jumbled mess. The seemingly invincible creature flopped to the ground with an alarming crash that sent cracks careering along the mirror terrain and into the far distance.

"Warning!" Robo cried. "Cyber Dimension membrane breached! Stability invalidated."

Robo's words had no meaning to Richard as a wave of super-heated gas swept over him. With a dull thud he slumped unconscious to the ground.

Richard awoke with a start and stumbled to his feet. He had no way of knowing how long he had been unconscious. He looked around and for a moment thought that he must be dreaming.

Before him lay the smouldering carcass of Flector. Its inanimate, skeletal frame was slumped on the surface of the now cracked mirror terrain. Everything was the same as it had been before he passed out. Yet, somehow, nothing was familiar. A whirring noise from behind him

caught Richard's attention. He turned his head to see the hovering form of Robo.

"Where are we?" Richard asked.

"Destruction of Flector has created dimensional membrane malfunction," Robo said. "We have entered Cyber Dimension sub-version. Vortex instability has increased danger."

Richard groaned as Robo continued.

"Locate Omni pieces."

"Omni pieces – what are they?"

"Find all. Key to Cyber Dimension exit. Hidden in sub-version."

Before Richard had the chance to take in this latest revelation, there was a loud cracking sound. He looked around for the source of the noise and saw the ground split asunder. The mirrored land was tearing itself apart.

With Robo close behind, Richard raced towards the cyber cruiser. Scrambling onto it, he quickly started the controls and soared into the air.

Beneath him the ground was churning and vibrating. Razor-sharp fragments of glass were thrown into the air like deadly confetti.

Perilous race

The shards of glass rained down on Richard and Robo as if they had a life of their own. It was as though the Cyber Dimension was reaping its revenge on those who had dared to break the delicate membrane that separated it from other worlds and dimensions.

Richard ducked behind the cyber cruiser's control console and tried to shield himself from the glass splinters. This was only partially successful. His protective armour was able to stop the smaller fragments from injuring him, but he knew

that if one of the larger shards of glass were to hit him he would be defenceless.

Just as it seemed that they were pulling away from the glass explosion, another obstacle appeared.

"Robo!" Richard called. "The cyber cruiser seems to be slowing down. I can't get any acceleration!"

"Air density unstable," Robo responded. "It is creating friction."

"Is there anything I can do to increase the cruiser's power?"

Robo did not answer. Instead, one of his metallic arms reached over to a small socket in the machine's outer casing.

"Adding Robo's power supply to cyber cruiser," said the robot.

Richard felt the air rush around him as the vehicle increased velocity.

"I think it's working," he said.

Desperate measures

The additional speed drew them away from the pieces of glass. Richard felt a surge of relief. It was a short-lived emotion. With a frown he turned to Robo.

"It's no good! We're slowing down again. The extra power's not enough!"

Searching for a solution, the robot's internal computers whirred into action.

Eyeing the ever-closing blanket of broken glass, Richard anxiously awaited Robo's response. With a click, the robot disengaged his power supply from the cyber cruiser.

"Robo," Richard cried in bemusement. "What are you doing?"

The cyber cruiser stalled to almost a dead halt. Richard watched in fear and prepared to face the full force of pursuing glass shards.

Then something remarkable happened.

Instead of blasting into the cyber cruiser, the shards stopped short. It was as if an invisible and gigantic umbrella was deflecting the onslaught.

Richard turned in amazement towards Robo.

The robot's voice was noticeably weaker. "Creating protective forcefield. Unable to sustain it indefinitely."

Robo's effort was just enough. As his power supply waned and the forcefield began to diminish, the furious assault came to an end. The fragments of glass descended harmlessly to the ground.

Richard breathed a sigh of relief and looked at Robo, whose effort had left him almost completely shorn of his power reserves.

"Reeechaargingg battteriesss..." the robot said in a weak and shrill voice.

Beneath the mirror

With Robo a silent passenger, Richard steered the cyber cruiser onwards. The shattered mirror terrain seemed never ending, but it was what lay underneath the broken glass that fascinated Richard.

Whatever forces that had created the Cyber Dimension where not sparing in their splendour. Beneath the speeding cruiser was some of the most breathtaking scenery that Richard had ever seen. Inside an enormous crack that seemed to split the landscape in two, were incredibly beautiful rock formations. Amid this scintillating backdrop there was also movement.

Richard smiled and watched as an amazing firework display lit up the Cyber Dimension.

Beneath him a multi-coloured festoon of brilliant spheres danced happily about the shimmering world. Fire-crackers of light cast glittering silhouettes amongst a pin-cushion of huge metallic needles. As the cyber cruiser glided lazily through the soundless domain, it was a sight that Richard would never forget.

The scent of danger

Richard's pleasure was short-lived. The first hint that something was wrong came when he began to realize that the dazzling lights below him contained a definite pattern.

A tangy smell of ozone in the air caused him to break into a cold sweat. It was then that Richard realized that the spheres of light were following him.

The recent experience had taught him that the sleek vehicle he was riding was not equipped for speed in this new Cyber Dimension. With Robo totally immobilized he realized that it was only a matter of time before his pursuers reached him.

"Robo! Robo! Wake up!" Richard yelled at the motionless Robot. There was no answer. Robo remained perched at the rear of the cyber cruiser, frozen like a metallic statue.

Within moments the speed of the balls of light had increased. They were upon him.

TRAPPED

The smell of ozone grew stronger as Richard felt the physical presence of the light spheres. There was no way out. He was completely surrounded.

SHOOMI'S SANCTUARY

Enter into the Cyber Dimension and engage optical recognition to find...

▶ Shoomi and Shoobi

These cute little creatures are still keeping up with Richard and Robo's every move. Scan this issue's illustrations and see if you can spot them hidden somewhere within.

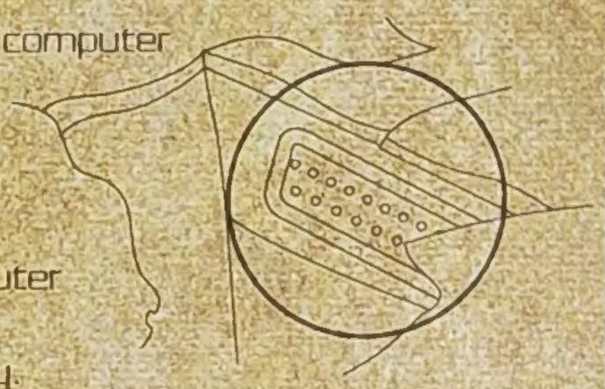
In issue 28 Shoomi and Shoobi were on page 441.

▶ Computer Challenge

Another vitally important computer component from the sinister *Cyber Dimension* has been hidden in this issue. Help Richard and Robo locate it in less than three minutes.

When you have discovered the component's hiding place, can you guess what it is and what its function might be?

In last week's issue a computer power connector was hidden on page 443. Power connectors are used to connect computers and computer monitors to the main electrical power supply.



▶ Techscan cards folder

To make your superb Techscan cards folder you will need scissors and adhesive. Carefully cut out the folder and follow the instructions. When completed, your folder will hold the complete collection of 36 Techscan cards.

▶ Computer View panel

Since Richard was transported into the sinister Cyber Dimension, this mysterious panel has appeared twice in every issue. Later on in the story you will learn of its special function, but if you carefully study the computer view panels you will gain a valuable insight into the true purpose of the Richard's quest.

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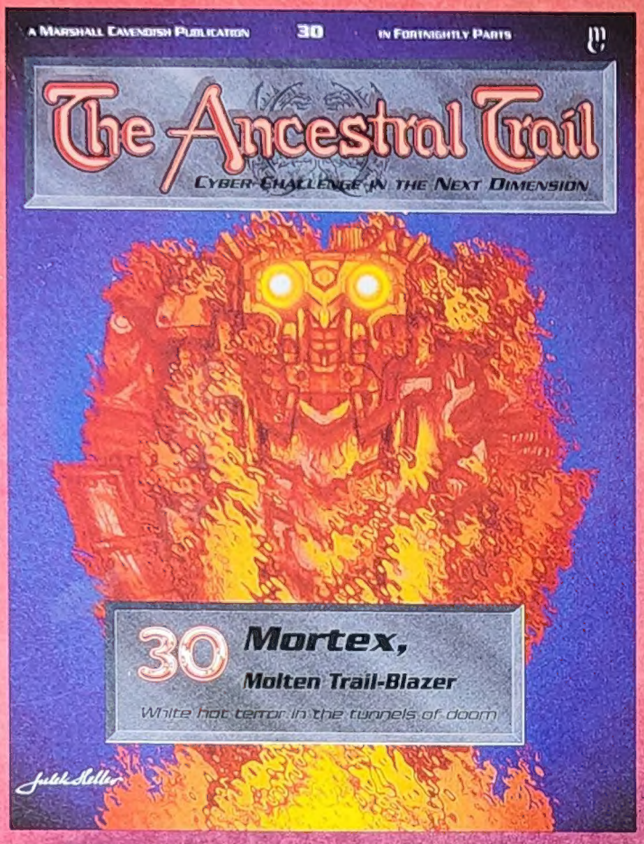

In Issue 30

Mortex,

Molten Trail-Blazer

Richard is held captive underground by the sinister pekods. Can he survive his sternest test and defeat the terrifying being of fire?

plus

- ▶ More **Techscan** cards for you to cut out and collect.
- ▶ 2 more **Cyber Power** cards to add to your collection.
- ▶ More playing pieces for the **Mainframe Control** game.

Coming in Issue 31

Holotron, Dynamic Deceiver

Trapped in cyberspace, Richard meets a hologram creature with the ability to morph into any shape.

plus

2 more **Techscan** cards ▶ 2 more **Cyber Power** cards ▶ More **Mainframe Control** playing pieces.

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